

# The Little Kangaroo

therapeutic story



Please read the Guide to Reading The Little Kangaroo before reading the story to your child. More information is available at [www.centrumdys.sk](http://www.centrumdys.sk), where you can find the pdf version of The Little Kangaroo along with the Guide to Reading The Little Kangaroo in multiple languages.



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Once upon a time there was a vast country. Animals of all kinds, whether big or small, feathered or furry, were running up and down that country. Their life was quite ordinary. The smallest of them were at home with their mothers and grandmothers. The older ones were in kindergarten or school. There they would play a lot and even study a little. The Sun was floating high over the country.

From time to time, he would hide behind the clouds. And every night he left his spot in the sky, just to be replaced by his sister Moon and her Stars. At times, his rays were pleasantly warm. Other times the animals preferred to hide from them in the welcoming shadows of trees. Occasionally the Sun would hide for several days, even weeks. But everyone knew that even if they could not see him for a while, the Sun was always somewhere up there in the sky. They knew that he was lovingly watching all the inhabitants of the country, following their every step.

A little kangaroo was skipping up a road. It had been long since he left his mother's pouch. However, his mother always said it felt like she had been carrying him there just the other day. The little kangaroo was extremely clever. He loved jumping far and high so much, that even at night, his legs would not stop moving. He loved to play with his friends too. But most of all, he loved jumping into rain puddles. He would watch the water splash high while doing so. Occasionally he would gather dung balls and stealthily throw them at the old grumpy ostrich. Thankfully, the ostrich almost never noticed him. The little kangaroo still had so much to do and could not even begin to imagine that he would one day have to leave his favourite bushes.

But then, one day a message began to spread across the country. At first the little kangaroo did not notice anything, except for the elders walking around with worried expressions. However, soon the message was everywhere. Everyone was whispering about it. Even though they did not want to tell the little kangaroo anything at first, he eventually heard it too. The mighty coyote had come from the east and wanted the country all to himself. He had been howling in all directions and many of the animals began to fear him. Everyone, even the kangaroos understood, that the coyote was close.

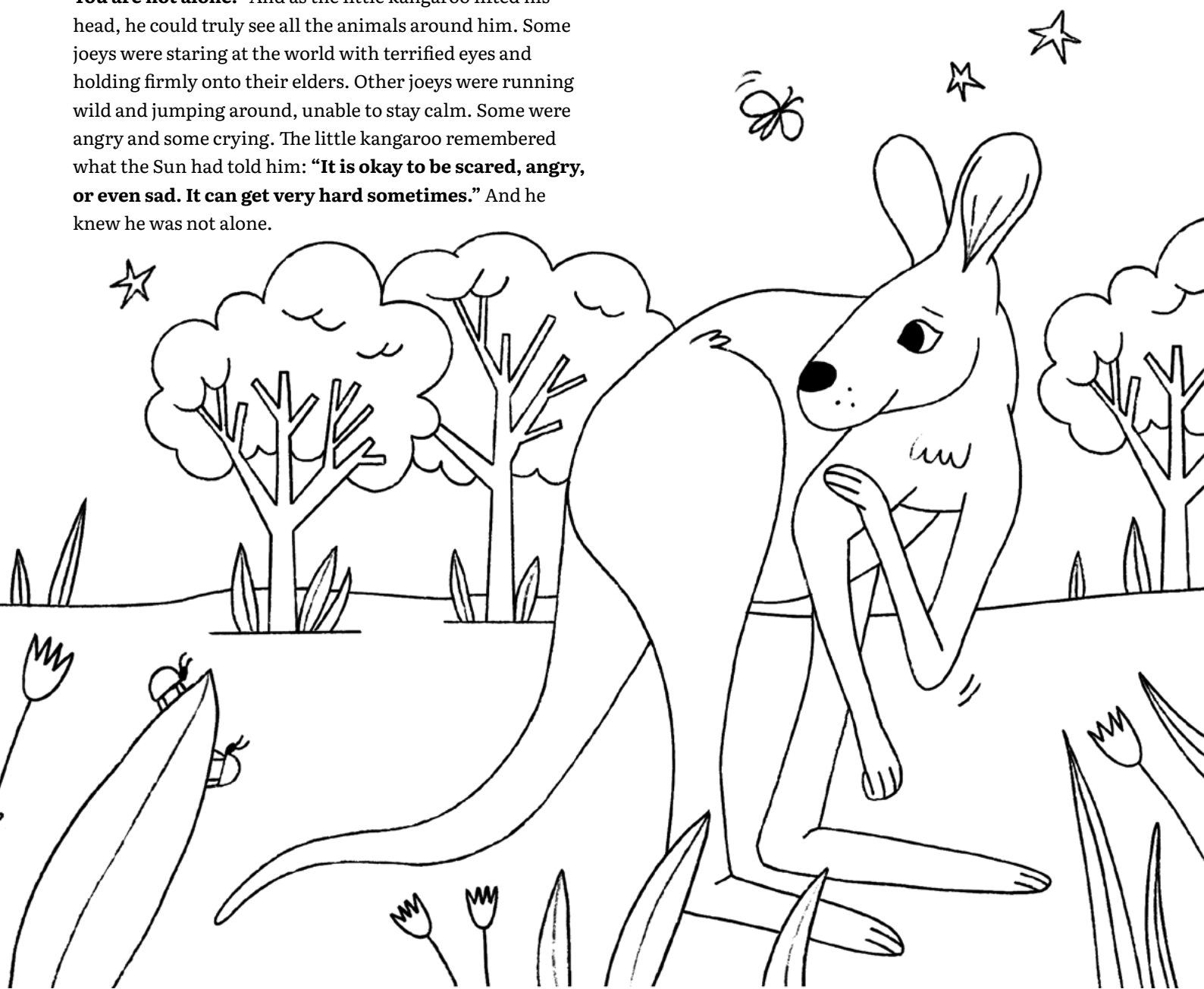


Suddenly, everything began to change. Loud bangs and booms could be heard outside. That was the coyote drawing even closer. The kangaroos decided they must go as far from him as possible, so he could not hurt them. Even the little kangaroo started to feel frightened. It was hard. There were moments when he was just so scared. His heart was pounding like a drum. He was struggling to breathe. He wanted to just run away from everything. In other moments, the little kangaroo was extremely sad. He did not want to leave his country. He even cried. Sometimes, however, no matter how much he wanted to cry, his tears would not fall. Other times he wanted to howl as loud as the coyote. Sometimes, however, he could not utter a single word, no matter how much he wanted to. His head felt empty, as if it had been turned off.

The Sun was watching it all unravel. He would have loved to step down to Earth to be with the little kangaroo. Sadly, that was impossible. Therefore, the Sun decided to gently caress the little kangaroo's cheek with his rays and whisper to him: **"It is okay to be scared, angry, or even sad. It can get very hard sometimes. But look around you. You are not alone."** And as the little kangaroo lifted his head, he could truly see all the animals around him. Some joeys were staring at the world with terrified eyes and holding firmly onto their elders. Other joeys were running wild and jumping around, unable to stay calm. Some were angry and some crying. The little kangaroo remembered what the Sun had told him: **"It is okay to be scared, angry, or even sad. It can get very hard sometimes."** And he knew he was not alone.

The kangaroos knew what they had to do. They could not stay and wait still until the coyote came all the way to them. Therefore, they decided to act. It was an awfully hard decision to make, but the kangaroos agreed that they had to split up. The joeys and their mothers would run far far away from the coyote. They would run somewhere, where he would not be able to hurt them and where they would not hear his howling. The strong and powerful kangaroos had to stay and protect their country.

The little kangaroo did not know what to do. He felt heavy as he was firmly holding onto his mother. More than anything else, he wanted to turn around and stay. That was, however, impossible. Everything was happening too fast, and it did not make much sense. But then, suddenly, he felt the Sun's warm rays stroking his cheek. He remembered what the Sun had told him before: **"It is okay to be scared, angry, or even sad. It can get very hard sometimes."** He tightened his grip on his mother's paw.



His father saw them off. The little kangaroo felt a heavy feeling in his chest. He wanted all of them to continue on the road together. The father noticed how heavy the little kangaroo felt. And the little kangaroo knew, that if his father could, he would have loved to go to the end of the world with them. But it was not possible.

“My dear little kangaroo, you will experience many things now. Some of them you will like, they will be enjoyable and bring you happiness the same way jumping in puddles did. Others will be hard and make you sad, tired, even angry. That is why I am giving you this sachet. It contains my talisman. It will protect and help you.”

“And what will protect you?” asked the little Kangaroo.

“The Sun will protect me. And when he will not be able to protect me anymore, he will take me with him to the heavens, from where I will be able to watch over you.”

“I would like to stay with you,” whispered the little kangaroo.

“I know. I would love to stay with you too. But it is not possible right now. Remember, whenever there is something, you want to tell me, tell it to the Sun and he will whisper the message to me.”

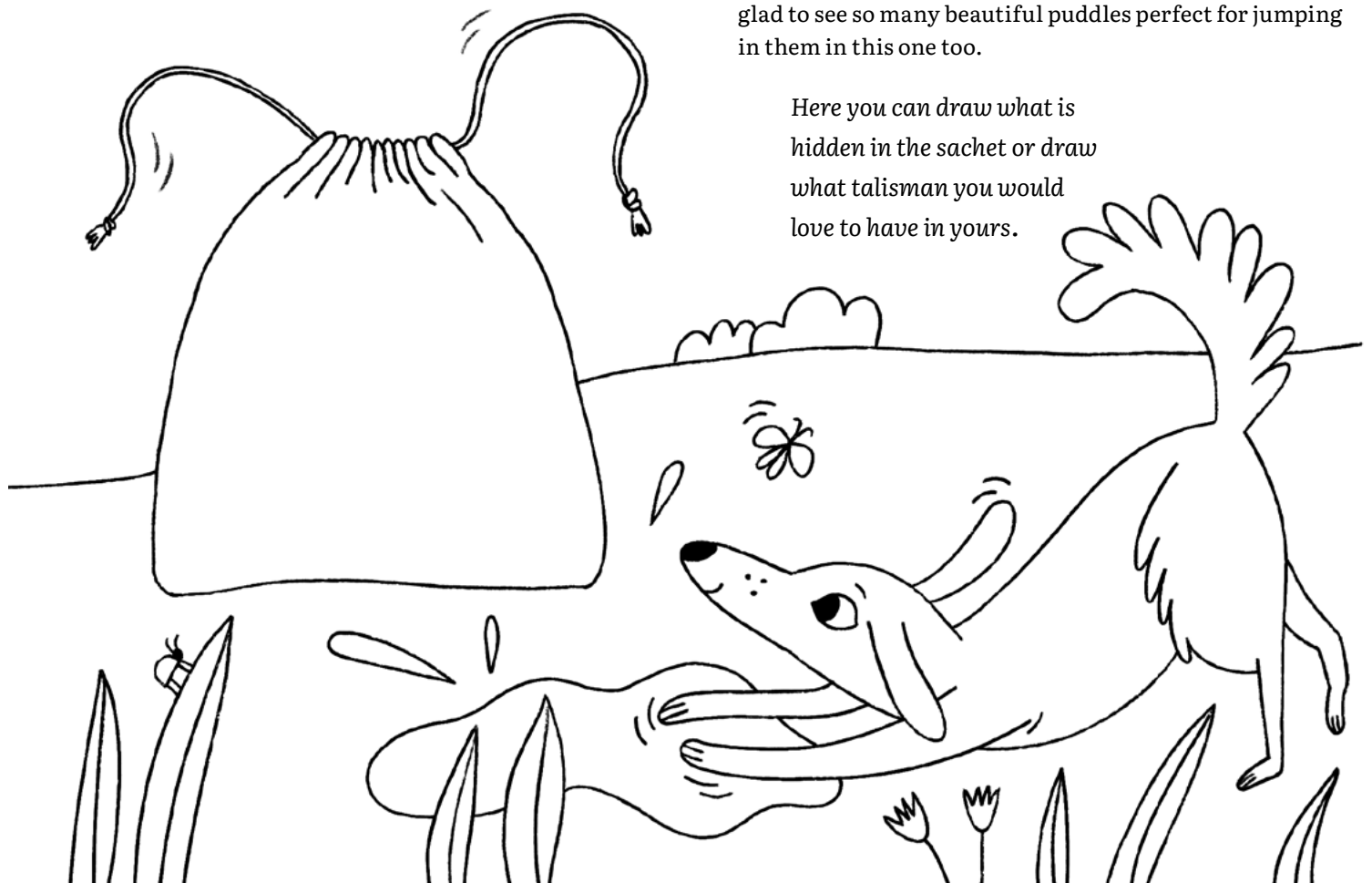
The road that the little kangaroo had to walk with his mother was exceptionally long. Sometimes he did not have the energy to continue. All around him were various animals. The smaller ones were crying, the bigger were nervous. And even when it seemed like they were far away from the coyote, the little kangaroo was still terrified. He could not imagine what the place they were travelling to would be like. Would there be any puddles? He continued to onto his mother’s paw firmly.

One morning the little kangaroo woke up and noticed a small puppy nearby. It was sitting and smiling with its big doggy smile, wagging its tail so hard it almost flew away. As the little kangaroo walked closer, the puppy ran towards him playfully. It was jumping like on a trampoline. “I can jump too,” realized the little kangaroo and they started jumping together. Then they noticed a huge puddle nearby. The little kangaroo pounced into it along with the puppy so hard that the water ended up splashing in all directions. The puppy then started to shake the water off. The shake started at the head and went all the way to the tip of the pup’s tail. The little kangaroo started to laugh. He shook himself dry as well. From the top of his head to the tip of his tail. He felt all the worries shaking off along with the water. Even though he had sometimes felt very weak and small along the way, he now noticed how he had grown bigger and stronger. He could jump further than ever before.

When he got tired, he suddenly felt sad. He remembered his beautiful country. A single tear started to roll down his cheek. The puppy came up to him and wiped the tear with its warm tongue. The kangaroo remembered what the Sun had told him: **“It is okay to be scared, angry, or even sad. It can get very hard sometimes. But look around you. You are not alone.”** He wrapped his paws around the puppy’s neck and pressed his head into its soft fur.

And when the kangaroo wiped his tears away, he saw that the puppy was leading him to a new country, which is slightly different and slightly similar to his own. No bangs and booms could be heard in this country, though. Despite loving the life in his own country, the little kangaroo was glad to see so many beautiful puddles perfect for jumping in them in this one too.

Here you can draw what is hidden in the sachet or draw what talisman you would love to have in yours.



# Guide to “The Little Kangaroo” story

## Dear parent or care-giver,

the story in your hands was written in cooperation with psychologists and special education professionals. Stories like these are called therapeutic stories.

### They have specific aims:

- to help children process a difficult experience.
- to remind children that they are skillful and have control over their life, and that there is hope – hope that, one day, life will become bearable and even enjoyable again.

The story can fulfil its aim only with your help, as you are among the closest and most important to the affected children. Please, read these recommendations and advice before reading the story with your child/the child you are caring for.

## Read the story in a safe place

This story is intended for children who are, at least temporary, in a safe place. If you are still on the road, or there is no place you can consider your safe haven now, leave this story for later. Naturally, the child is unable to process past experiences, while they are still present in a difficult situation. If you do not have a safe haven yet, reading this story could be exhausting and even distressing. You can read it once you have unpacked your bags and can let yourself rest for at least a couple days somewhere.

## Emotions while reading

This story is for children, but it can easily make you emotional as well. You should not fight these feelings. If you do not know how to talk about emotions with your child, you can try using the language in the story. Calmly name the feelings brought up by reading and get to know them. Try not to judge them. No feeling is correct or incorrect in this moment. Remember the sun’s words from the story: **“It is okay to be scared, angry, or even sad. It can get very hard sometimes. But you are not alone.”** Likewise, let the child experience these feelings. You should not try to regulate or guide them in any way.

## Reactions to the story

Everybody reacts to the story differently – some feel inspired to draw. That is why the illustrations are black and white, so the story can function as a coloring book. It is completely okay if the child decides to leave the pages uncolored. Some children will want to read the story over and over and have a ton of questions. Others will listen to it and not say anything. All of this is alright. This guide provides useful techniques, which you can use if you or your child get overwhelmed by emotions.

## Read to the end

The story is designed so that the conclusion brings hope and closure after difficult times. It is therefore helpful if you do not stop reading it halfway through. You should read to the end, so the tension which can rise up in your child can also be released at the end.

## Trust yourself

You know your child best. You are the closest to them. They have survived all this thanks to you. You were by their side, and lead them to safety. Trust your instinct. If you feel they need a hug, give them a hug. If they need to cry, be there for them. And if they are disobedient, do not lecture them more than normally. Reading together and experiencing mutual closeness and support are vital parts of the therapeutic story.

## Grounding activities

Emotions, images and heavy thoughts can rise while reading the story, but also at any time during the day.

Therefore, we introduce a grounding technique, which can be used for yourself, your child, or together. They are designed to relieve stress and are suitable for calming. You should only offer these activities to your child, not force them. It is important for the child to understand you are trying to help. They can learn these techniques gradually and use them on their own when needed.

## First aid for children overwhelmed by emotion

The situation you have experienced may cause your child to experience symptoms of acute stress syndrome. It can be triggered by a sudden noise, an overflight, an odor, or basically anything. You can see that the child seems to „get stuck“, „shut down“ and does not respond to you at all. They are overwhelmed with stress energy, so their mind is not „here and now“, but „then and there.“ In these situations, you can try to lead your child out of this state. Ideally, you should engage a different sensory channel than the one that is overwhelmed. Movement is used most frequently with children. You can challenge the child for a run, start jumping and shake off the tension. You can also

engage touch and taste. **If your child does not react, try:**

- giving them a piece of chocolate, some candy, an orange or lemon,
- touching them,
- throwing a ball with them (provoking automatic reflex, throw - catch).

## Three grounding techniques for emotion regulation

### How to offer the child an activity:

*"I can see that ..... (describe specific symptoms). I know some techniques that can help you. Let's try them together. We will do three activities and check how you are feeling at the end. You can either sit or stand during these activities."*

### Examples of symptoms:

*"I can see that you are having trouble breathing, that you have turned pale, that you are not paying attention to what I am saying, that you are shaking, that something has frightened you." And so on.*

## 1. Butterfly touch

Cross your arms to let the right hand touch your left shoulder and left hand touch the right shoulder. Alternate tapping your right and left hand on your shoulders. Choose comfortable speed and intensity. Breathe calmly. One cycle should have approximately 20-30 taps. After that, take a deep breath and repeat one more time. Finish with a deep inhale and exhale.

## 2. Basic grounding

Stand with your feet firmly on the ground. Focus on feeling like you are really standing firmly. Now look around you and find ten items of the same color. After that, deeply inhale and exhale. Now find ten items of the same material. After that, deeply inhale and exhale.

### When working with children:

- you can change the tasks when repeating. Find ten items of different color, blue color, made from paper, wood.
- Sometimes you need to improvise. When in a room with a smaller number of items, try finding five blue and five white items.
- Adjust the number of items to the child's skills.
- Instead of counting in their head, the child lists the items out loud while you show them how many they have named on your fingers.

## 3. Calming down

Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Pay attention to how you are breathing. While inhaling, imagine the air entering your body and filling your lungs and expanding them until they are full. While exhaling imagine the lungs relaxing, the warmed-up air slowly leaving your body. Repeat.

## 4. Finishing

Now look at me and show me with your hands how big the discomfort you feel is. If you wish, you can repeat any of the activities.

## Shaking

Shaking is a natural reaction that can accompany stress and trauma, so it often occurs in situations when we return to previous difficult experiences in thought or are otherwise reminded of them. It has its biological purpose – the body is producing adrenaline and noradrenaline as a stress response and muscles are getting ready to react. It is not necessary to try to stop the shaking in the moment – it has a purpose, and the body needs it. Similar responses are stuttering or involuntary grimaces.

### How to offer the child an activity:

*"The little kangaroo and the puppy in our story shook their worries off. You can try seeing what shaking does to your body with me."*

*"Try shaking like a dog. A dog starts shaking at the head, and gradually engages the neck, hands, torso, abdomen, buttocks, thighs, and the rest of the legs. Try shaking your whole body off. When finished try focusing on your body. Do you still feel any tension? If yes, shake that place off more strongly. Gradually change the intensity of shaking to feel good in the moment." Some people like to shake strongly, others very gently. Although this activity is not limited in time, it is good to keep it up for at least 2-3 minutes, or until you get a pleasant feeling.*

## In conclusion

We believe this guide will help you fulfil the aim of the therapeutic story. This story and guide were created in Slovakia. Everyone who worked on creating it did so without claim to pay. Our goal is to help children and their close ones running from war. Therefore, we waive all copyrights and give permission for free distribution of the story and guide. At [www.centrumdys.sk](http://www.centrumdys.sk) you will find pdf versions in various languages available for free download. We will be pleased to know how far the story has come. Feel free to contact us at [pekarovicova@centrumdys.sk](mailto:pekarovicova@centrumdys.sk)

